COURT SERVICES DIVISION

BUSINESS PLAN 2004-2005

106-06032/

Court Services Division

The Court Services Division is responsible for the following core business functions:

- administration and support of the following courts:
  - Nova Scotia Court of Appeal
  - Supreme Court of Nova Scotia (General and Family Divisions)
  - Provincial Court
  - Family Court
  - Probate Court
  - Bankruptcy Court
  - Small Claims Court
  - Summary Proceedings Court
- management of court offices and registries including probate and bankruptcy
- administration of the Criminal Code Review Board
- court security and transportation of prisoners
- enforcement of court orders
- administration of the Justice of the Peace program
- management of the Restorative Justice program
- management of the Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP)
- management of the following programs designed to reduce conflict and litigation in the family law matters:
  - Parent Information
  - Conciliation
  - Mediation
  - Supervised Access
  - Court Assistance
- provide dispute resolution options

Our Core Business Functions

- Provide infrastructure and support to courts
- Safely transport prisoners and maintain court security
- Enforce Court Orders
- Provide alternate dispute resolution options
- Inform the public about the courts and the services provided
- Manage the Maintenance Enforcement Program, programs in support of the Family Division and Family Courts and the Restorative Justice Program.

Our Mission

The Court Services Division is dedicated to service excellence and to the provision of a fair and accessible justice administration.

Our Vision

Court Services makes knowledge based decisions after listening to stakeholders, clients and staff, seeking out best practices and exploring options to continually improve the administration of the court system. Our staff have the training, tools and support to provide excellent client service, and work in a safe and respectful team environment.

Where do we want to be in 2005: our goals

1. Client satisfaction is at the heart of everything we do. We constantly work to improve service.

2. Our staff are satisfied and well-trained and work in a safe, supportive, respectful team environment.

3. We have the tools we need to best administer the court system, including healthy work sites, the best available technology, stable resources and timely financial information.

4. Management and staff have excellent communication with each other and participate in an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders, the public and the judiciary.

What we will accomplish toward our goals in 2004-2005

Goal #1: Client satisfaction is at the heart of everything we do. We constantly work to improve service.

Court Services will continue the Self-Represented Litigants Project.
In 2004-2005, we will:

1. Review the recommendations of the March 2004 Self-Represented Needs Assessment Report.
2. Develop additional plain language brochures and information kits.
3. Pilot a Family Law Information Centre at the Halifax Supreme Court (Family Division).
4. Develop guidelines for staff and the public on the role of staff in providing legal information, not legal advice.

Court Services will seek the expansion of the Supreme Court (Family Division) province-wide.
In 2004-2005, we will:

5. Submit a final proposal to the federal government.
6. Develop an implementation plan in consultation with staff, the judiciary and justice stakeholders.

Court Services will continue to explore appropriate alternatives to court.
In 2004-2005, we will:

7. Provide administrative recalculation of child support in Supreme Court (Family Division).
8. Recommend options to provide mediation services in the Probate Court.
9. Support the federal evaluation of the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice program.

Court Services will explore the possibility of providing on-line services.
In 2004-2005, we will:

10. Develop a "Maintenance Enforcement Program On-line" system for client information.
11. Work with Executive Office of the Nova Scotia Judiciary to develop on-line forms.
12. Explore, with Service Nova Scotia, options for accepting on-line fine payments.

Goal #2: Our staff are satisfied and well-trained and work in a safe, supportive, respectful team environment.

Court Services will begin to determine the appropriate staffing levels for the work we do.
In 2004-2005, we will:

- 13. Develop a methodology to determine staffing levels.
- 14. Review remuneration and usage of casual sheriff officers.
- 15. Review remuneration of clerks sitting in the evening in Small Claims Court, Summary Offence Court.
- 16. Explore whether a roster of casual court staff is feasible.
- 17. Review the operational requirements relating to staff and administrative Justices of the Peace.

Court Services will renew its commitment to training staff.
In 2004-2005, we will:

- 18. Work with the Justice Learning Centre to establish a staff training initiative plan.

Court Services will continue efforts to recognize the significant contributions of staff.
In 2004-2005, we will:

- 19. Respond to issues raised by staff in the 2004-2005 business planning process.
- 20. Hold Staff Appreciation Days in February 2005.
- 21. Continue to encourage staff to participate in divisional, departmental and community committees.
- 22. Continue to engage staff in the business planning process.

Court Services will focus on improving staff wellness.
In 2004-2005, we will:

- 23. Participate in the Department of Justice committee on Staff Wellness and review any recommendations from the committee.

Goal #3: We have the tools we need to best administer the court system, including healthy work sites, the best available technology, stable resources and timely financial information.

Court Services will improve court facilities.
In 2004-2005, we will:

- 24. Monitor the construction of a new Justice Centre in Port Hawkesbury and participate on the user commitee.
- 25. Participate in the user committee to select a site and design a new Justice Centre in Lunenburg County.
- 26. Co-ordinate renovations to administrative areas at the Halifax Provincial Court.
- 27. Review options and make recommendations for facility improvements in the New Glasgow Justice Centre.
- 28. Review recommendations from the Metro Area study.
- 29. Develop space requirements and documentation to support a new submission for a Justice Centre in Yarmouth.
- 30. Improve access for prisoner movement in Kentville.
- 31. Update video monitoring capacity in the holding facilities in Halifax Provincial Court and Kentville Justice Centre and other facilities.

Court Services will explore technology options.
In 2004-2005, we will:

- 32. Select and begin implementation of a new digital recording system for the province.
- 33. Complete a Business Case on the use of video conferencing for judicial interim release hearings.
- 34. Implement automated courtroom utilization system.
- 35. Participate in the implementation of the Justice Enterprise Information Network.

Court Services will continue to improve policy, procedures & processes.
In 2004-2005, we will:

- 36. Explore a certification process for court interpreters.
- 37. Explore a certification process for court reporters.
- 38. Assess the process for manual development and renewal.
- 39. Participate in the Civil Procedure Rules Reform project.
- 40. Develop process audits/best practices audits for Sheriff Services.
- 41. Participate in the Department of Justice Justice Indicators Committee.
- 42. Develop practice and curriculum standards for the Restorative Justice Program service providers.
- 43. Implement, wherever achievable this year, the recommendations of the Auditor General's 2003 report on Court Services.

Goal #4: Management and staff have excellent communication with each other and participate in ongoing dialogue with stakeholders, the public and the judiciary.

Court Services will review appropriate signage for all court facilities.
In 2004-2005, we will:

- 44. Install signage in the Sydney Justice Centre.
- 45. Participate in the committee reviewing appropriate signage.

Court Services will improve its usage of the Internet as an information source for the public, and its usage of the Internet and the Intranet as an information source for staff.
In 2004-2005, we will:

- 46. Review and begin to implement the Court Services Website Committee's recommendations on subject matter
- 47. Develop a process for website maintenance

Court Services will actively seek out ways to improve communication between all staff.
In 2004-2005, we will:

- 48. Review the recommendations of the 2003 focus group on communications.
- 49. Seek opportunities for the Executive Director and Directors to attend meetings with staff and local events.

Court Services will continue to consult with all justice stakeholders
In 2004-2005, we will:

- 50. Institute regular meetings with *L'Association des juristes d'expression française de la Nouvelle-Écosse*
- 51. *Seek* out opportunities to work with all justice stakeholders, including the Mi'kmaq community, transition houses, police agencies, municipalities and the Nova Scotia bar to improve access to justice.
- 52. Support Aboriginal Justice Initiatives through participation in the TriPartite Justice Committee and the Mi'kmaq Legal Support Network Advisory Committee.
- 53. Explore the feasibility of expanding the municipal parking ticket program and implement in participating municipalities.